

Message Text

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TAGS: TGEN, TBIO, UR, US

SUBJECT: US-USSR HEALTH AGREEMENT: CONGENITAL HEART DISEASE

(03.0104) VISIT OF DR. DOUGLAS M. BEHRENDT

REF: DHEW/MOH TELEX 463

1. DR. BEHRENDT REPORTED TO SCIENCE OFFICER, NOVEMBER 3, THAT HIS TRAVEL TO MOSCOW, KIEV, LENINGRAD, AND TBILISI HAD NOT BEEN ENTIRELY SUCCESSFUL. HE HAD COME, HE SAID, TO LOOK INTO AREAS OF POSSIBLE U.S.-

USSR COOPERATION IN CONGENITAL HEART DISEASE, BUT HAD FOUND THAT THE SOVIETS ARE FAR BEHIND THE U.S. TECHNOLOGICALLY AND REALLY HAVE LITTLE

TO OFFER.

2. DR. BEHRENDT SAID USEFUL WORK MIGHT BE THE STUDY OF UNTREATED CONGENITAL HEART DISEASE IN SOVIETS INFANTS. THERE IS A GENERAL POLICY IN MOSCOW AND KIEV, HE SAID, AGAINST OPERATING ON INFANTS SUFFERING FROM CONGENITAL HEART DISEASE, WHEREAS IN THE U.S. ALL CASES ARE QUICKLY TREATED, THEREBY ELIMINATING THE OPPORTUNITY FOR STUDY OF THE NATURAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE DISEASE. DR. BEHRENDT ALSO MENTIONED THE POSSIBLE COLLABORATION IN THE TESTING OF NEW BIOMEDICAL MATERIALS. SUCH TESTING IN THE U.S., HE SAID, IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT BECAUSE OF LEGAL CONSTRAINTS. HE POINTED OUT, HOWEVER, THAT THE USEFULNESS OF ANY SUCH JOINT RESEARCH WOULD

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DEPEND ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE METHODOLOGY.

3. DR. BEHRENDT WAS DISAPPOINTED BY THE LACK OF SUBSTANCE IN THE SCHEDULES PROVIDED HIM. HE SPENT FOUR DAYS IN TBILISI AND ONLY TWO HOURS IN A MEDICAL INSTITUTION AND THAT FOR A SUPERFICIAL TOUR WHICH DID NOT INCLUDE ANY DISCUSSION. IN LENINGRAD HE AND HIS WIFE WERE MET AND HOUSED BY INTOURIST AND NEVER MET ANYONE AT ALL. THEY SPENT A DAY-AND-A-HALF TOURING. BEHRENDT BLAMES MOSCOW/LENINGRAD INTER-INSTITUTIONAL RIVALRIES FOR THE BREAKDOWN OF HIS AGENDA IN LENINGRAD.

4. BECAUSE THE SOVIETS ARE FAR BEHIND THE U.S. IN METHODOLOGY AND TECHNIQUE IN OPEN HEART SURGERY ON INFANTS, AND BECAUSE THERE APPEARS TO BE A LACK OF COMMITMENT TO THE PROGRAM, DR. BEHRENDT DOES NOT RECOMMEND THAT ANY FURTHER EXCHANGES UNDER THE CONGENITAL HEART DISEASE SECTION OF THE BILATERAL TAKE PLACE UNTIL A THOROUGH REASSESSMENT OF THE PROGRAM CAN BE MADE.

5. COMMENT: IF OTHER US EXPERTS SHARE DR. BEHRENDT'S VIEW THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE LITTLE TO OFFER IN CONGENITAL HEALTH DISEASE, DHEW MIGHT WISH TO GIVE CONSIDERATION TO SHIFTING ATTENTION TO OTHER MORE PROMISING AREAS OF COOPERATION. MATLOCK

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